R.J. Reynolds is developing cigarette with less smoke

Heating tobacco, not burning it, cuts ash, odor, secondhand smoke

BY JULIANNE BASINGER
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH, N.C. — R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. is working to develop a low-smoke cigarette that the company claims eliminates 90 percent of secondhand smoke.

The cigarette, which may be called Eclipse, also has no lingering odor, no ashes and none of the staining associated with other cigarettes, company spokeswoman Maura Ellis said yesterday.

"Smokers face an increasingly intolerant environment and expect the tobacco industry to meet those concerns of theirs," Ellis said.

But the Winston-Salem-based company does not expect the new cigarette, which has tar and nicotine levels similar to ultra-light brands, to completely quell the controversy over smoking, she said.

"I don't foresee the end of all controversies," Ellis said. "We will not claim that it is a safe or safer cigarette. Our only claims will be connected to the secondhand smoke and the tar and nicotine levels being lower."

The cigarette will carry the same surgeon general's warning as other cigarettes, she said.

The cigarette generates less smoke because it heats the tobacco, rather than burning it. A highly purified piece of carbon in the tip of the cigarette is lighted, and the warm air generated by the carbon flows over the tobacco, releasing the flavor without burning the tobacco.

"It's not unlike a coffee maker, where you pour the hot water over the coffee grounds, and while the grounds don't burn, the flavor is released," Ellis said.

The cigarette is still being developed, and no market release date has been set, she said.

"We want to meet smokers' taste expectations by still being able to reduce secondhand smoke," Ellis said. "If we don't have that taste right, we won't go to market with it. We're still working on it."

The company must perform more tests on the cigarette once it settles on a prototype, although R.J. Reynolds already has conducted some consumer tests in the Midwest and Southeast, she said.

Ellis declined to give the consumers' response, but said the company found the low-smoke cigarette did address demands for less secondhand smoke.

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> **MAURA ELLIS**
> R.J. REYNOLDS TOBACCO CO.

"It goes a long way toward addressing the wants of smokers, which is more what we're concerned about," she said. "They're our concern, and if they're telling us they want one with less secondhand smoke, that's what we're going to do."

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